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The Impact of Hu's Music Diplomacy on Mongolia's Tourism National Branding Program

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of Hu's music diplomacy on Mongolia's national branding program. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method with secondary data analysis from journal articles, books, relevant reports, and media covering The Hu's activities. The results indicate that The Hu, with their unique approach of combining traditional Mongolian music elements with modern rock, has successfully raised global awareness of Mongolian culture and enhanced the country's positive image. Their international performances received awards, and collaborations with renowned musicians have introduced Mongolian cultural elements to a wider audience, creating curiosity and appreciation for Mongolia's cultural heritage. Strategic recommendations include greater government support, enhanced collaboration with digital platforms, and educational and cultural exchange programs.

Introduction

Music plays a vital role in Mongolian culture, reflecting the nomadic lifestyle that has been characteristic of Mongolian society for centuries. Traditional Mongolian music, such as the throat singing technique Khoomei, the Morin Khuur (horsehead fiddle), and the Biyelgee dance, serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of cultural expression, spirituality, and national identity (UNESCO, 2009). Khoomei, for instance, is a vocal technique that allows the singer to

produce two or more tones simultaneously, creating a rich and layered sound. This technique has been passed down through generations and is used in various contexts, including religious ceremonies, spiritual rituals, and cultural celebrations, making it an integral part of Mongolia's cultural heritage. (Mu'asaroh & Noor, 2021). The Morin Khuur, with its distinctive deep and melodic sound, is often used to accompany folk tales and ceremonies, and it symbolizes the cultural and spiritual identity of the Mongolian people. The Biyelgee dance, a folk dance, tells stories of nomadic life, connections with nature, and historical events, creating a rich and immersive experience for the audience. (Irie et al., 2018).

In the context of globalization and modernization, there is an urgency to preserve and promote traditional music. (Fauziah & Setiawan, 2023). In this regard, Hu's role becomes highly significant. Formed in 2016 in Ulaanbaatar, The Hu is a band that combines traditional Mongolian music elements with modern rock, creating a new genre they call Hunnu Rock. The name "The Hu" comes from the Mongolian word "Hu," meaning human, reflecting their goal to reach and unite people through their music. The Hu has not only created unique and captivating music but also brought Mongolian cultural heritage to the international stage. (Sitohang, 2022). Their debut album, "The Gereg" (2019), received critical and commercial acclaim, ranking high on various international charts. This success demonstrates how The Hu has effectively blended traditional Mongolian music with rock, attracting a global audience and introducing many to Mongolian music and culture. (D'Evelyn et al., 2022).

Music diplomacy, as a form of soft power, plays an important role in national branding strategies. (Attahira, 2023). Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence and attract through cultural appeal and values, rather than through military or economic force. In this context, music diplomacy is used to introduce and promote a country's culture to an international audience, build a positive image, and strengthen international relationships. (Abdillah, 2023). Through their music, The Hu have become cultural ambassadors for Mongolia, introducing traditional Mongolian music elements to the world and raising awareness and appreciation of Mongolia's cultural heritage. By receiving awards such as "The Cultural Envoy of Mongolia" and "UNESCO Artist for Peace," The Hu have shown that music can be an effective tool in cultural diplomacy, helping to enhance Mongolia's image globally and support the country's diplomatic goals. (Peffault de Latour et al., 2022).

Therefore, the urgency of music in Mongolian culture, the significant role of The Hu in globally introducing traditional Mongolian music, and the relevance of music diplomacy to Mongolia's national branding illustrate how cultural elements can be used as strategic tools in international relations. Hu's efforts in promoting traditional Mongolian music through music diplomacy not only help preserve cultural heritage but also strengthen national identity and enhance Mongolia's diplomatic influence on the international stage.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the impact of Hu's music diplomacy on Mongolia's national branding program. Music diplomacy, as part of soft power, plays a crucial role in shaping a country's image on the international stage. The Hu, with their unique approach of blending traditional Mongolian music with modern rock, have become effective cultural ambassadors for Mongolia. This research aims to examine how Hu's music and diplomatic activities contribute to Mongolia's national branding, strengthen cultural identity, and enhance the country's appeal in the eyes of the world. The analysis will include an evaluation of the strategies used by The Hu in promoting Mongolian culture and the long-term impacts of their activities on Mongolia's international image and reputation.

This research holds significant theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, it will add to the existing literature on the influence of music diplomacy on nation branding, a relatively new field that requires further exploration. By studying Hu's case, this research will provide insights into how music can be used as a cultural diplomacy tool to build and strengthen national image on the global stage. Practically, this research will offer strategic recommendations for policymakers and cultural industry practitioners in Mongolia. These recommendations will focus on ways to maximize the use of music diplomacy in nation branding, identify best practices that other countries can adopt, and develop more effective strategies for promoting Mongolian culture through music. Thus, this research is expected to support Mongolia's efforts to strengthen its cultural identity and enhance its diplomatic influence through the power of music.

Music diplomacy is a form of cultural diplomacy that utilizes music as a tool to build international relationships and enhance national image. Music, as a universal language, has the power to transcend linguistic and geographical boundaries, allowing countries to communicate directly and effectively with global audiences. Countries can use music diplomacy to promote their cultural values, strengthen bilateral relations, and increase understanding and tolerance among cultures.

In the context of Mongolia, music diplomacy through the band The Hu has played a significant role in nation branding. The Hu, with their approach of combining traditional Mongolian music elements with modern rock, have successfully captured global audiences' attention and raised awareness about Mongolian culture. Through international tours and performances at music festivals, The Hu has helped strengthen Mongolia's image as a country with a rich and unique cultural heritage. Their efforts demonstrate how music can be used as an effective cultural diplomacy tool to support a nation's branding goals.

Thus, nation branding through music is a powerful strategy for building a positive image and increasing a country's international influence. Music, as a part of culture, can reach and influence global audiences, create strong emotional connections, and promote positive cultural values. Through music diplomacy, countries can strengthen national identity, build better international relationships, and enhance their reputation and attractiveness in the eyes of the world.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the impact of Hu's music diplomacy on Mongolia's national branding program. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply explore and understand phenomena through the analysis of rich, context-laden, non-numeric data. In this context, the researcher focuses on detailed descriptions and interpretations of how The Hu uses music as a tool for cultural diplomacy and how these efforts influence Mongolia's image internationally.

Data Sources

This research relies on secondary data obtained from various credible and relevant sources. The primary data sources include academic journal articles discussing music diplomacy and nation branding, books providing theoretical perspectives on soft power and cultural diplomacy, and related reports documenting The Hu's activities and influence. Additionally, media coverage of The Hu's activities, such as concert reviews, interviews, and music critiques, are also used as important data sources. This secondary data provides a comprehensive foundation for analysis and interpretation in this study.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this research involve the analysis of documents, articles, and reports related to Hu and music diplomacy. The researcher collects various types of documents, including academic publications, media articles, government reports, and publications from cultural institutions. Document analysis enables the researcher to identify key themes and gather in-depth information regarding Hu's strategies and the impact of their music diplomacy.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques used in this study are thematic and descriptive analysis. The thematic analysis involves the process of coding data to identify key themes and patterns emerging from the secondary data. The researcher then categorizes the data based on these themes to provide a clear structure for the analysis. Descriptive analysis is used to describe the phenomena being studied in detail, providing rich and deep narratives about how The Hu uses music as a diplomatic tool and its impact on Mongolia's national branding. By using this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the role and influence of music diplomacy in an international context.

Results and Discussion

Profile of The Hu and Their Music

The Hu is a Mongolian band that has successfully blended elements of traditional Mongolian music with modern rock to create a unique musical style they call "Hunnu Rock." The band was formed in 2016 in Ulaanbaatar by Galbadrakh Tsendbaatar, known by his stage name Gala. The idea for forming The Hu stemmed from a desire to introduce the world to the richness of traditional Mongolian music, which includes the throat singing technique Khoomei and the use of traditional instruments such as the Morin Khuur (horsehead fiddle) and the Tovshuur (two-stringed Mongolian lute).

The formation of The Hu began with Gala's musical journey, having long immersed himself in traditional Mongolian music. Together with other members such as Nyamjantsan Galsanjamts (Jaya), Enkhsaikhan Batjargal (Enkush), and Temuulen Naranbaatar (Temka), they began developing a musical concept that combines these elements with Western rock influences. With strong musical backgrounds and a commitment to preserving Mongolia's cultural heritage, the members of The Hu brought an innovative approach to their music, which quickly garnered attention both domestically and internationally. (Baatar et al., 2020).

Their debut album, "The Gereg" (2019), marked a significant milestone in their career, featuring songs such as "Yuve Yuve Yu" and "Wolf Totem," which received warm acclaim from global audiences. The Hu not only captivated listeners with their distinctive music but also with powerful lyrical messages that often reflect Mongolian values and

history. Their songs are heavily inspired by folklore, legends, and patriotic spirit, delivered through a combination of Khoomei vocals and traditional instruments blended with energetic rock rhythms.

The international success of The Hu continues to grow with world tours and performances at renowned music festivals. They have also collaborated with international musicians such as Jacoby Shaddix from Papa Roach, who contributed to a new version of "Wolf Totem." Their efforts in bringing traditional Mongolian music to the global stage have been recognized with various awards, including being named "UNESCO Artist for Peace" in 2020 (UNESCO, 2020). Through their dedication to blending traditional and modern musical elements, The Hu has successfully created a cultural bridge between Mongolia and the world. They not only introduce the unique elements of Mongolian music to a global audience but also build a positive image of their country through music. The profile and musical work of The Hu exemplify how art can function as an effective tool for cultural diplomacy, strengthening national identity and promoting cultural heritage on the international stage.

The Hu has developed a unique music genre they call "Hunnu Rock," which combines elements of traditional Mongolian music with modern rock. The genre name is derived from the ancient Xiongnu Empire (Hunnu in Mongolian), one of the early civilizations in the Mongolian region. Hunnu Rock is characterized by the use of Khoomei or throat singing, traditional instruments like the Morin Khuur (horsehead fiddle), Tovshuur (two-stringed lute), and Tsuur (Mongolian flute), all blended with electric guitars and rock drums. This combination creates a distinctive and energetic sound that reflects the strength and spirit of Mongolian culture.

The influence of Mongolian culture is evident in every aspect of Hu's music. Their lyrics are often inspired by Mongolian folklore, ancient legends, and patriotic values. For example, the song "Yuve Yuve Yu" explores national identity and pride in Mongolia's heritage, while "Wolf Totem" conveys messages of strength and courage, drawn from the symbolism of wolves in Mongolian culture. The Hu also frequently use traditional costumes and visual elements depicting nomadic life and Mongolia's natural landscapes in their music videos, adding cultural depth and authenticity to their work. (Nylander, 2023).

Moreover, the throat singing technique Khoomei that they use is one of the most striking aspects of their music. Khoomei is a traditional vocal technique in which the singer produces two or more tones simultaneously, creating a rich and layered sound. This technique has been an integral part of Mongolian folk music for centuries and is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. By integrating Khoomei into rock music, The Hu not only preserves this tradition but also introduces it to a global audience, creating a new appreciation for Mongolian cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2009).

Through their musical innovations, The Hu has successfully bridged the gap between tradition and modernity. They have brought traditional Mongolian music elements into a contemporary context, creating a genre that appeals not only to Mongolian listeners but also to international audiences. Their success in combining traditional

instruments with modern musical styles has helped expand the reach of Mongolian music and raise global awareness of their culture. Hu has proven that music can be a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy, helping to strengthen national identity and promote Mongolian culture on the world stage (Johansson, 2010).

Increasing Global Awareness of Mongolian Culture

The Hu has successfully raised international awareness about Mongolian culture through their unique musical approach, which combines traditional Mongolian elements with modern rock. By incorporating throat singing techniques such as Khoomei, traditional instruments like the Morin Khuur, and lyrics reflecting Mongolian values and folklore, The Hu created a new genre called Hunnu Rock. Their international performances, including world tours and appearances at renowned music festivals like Download Festival in the UK and Rock im Park in Germany, have captured the attention of global media and wider audiences. This extensive media coverage not only promotes their music but also introduces Mongolian culture to international audiences, fostering new curiosity and appreciation for Mongolia's cultural heritage.

The Hu's success in blending traditional elements with modern music has made them effective cultural ambassadors, bringing the voice and stories of Mongolia to the global stage. With each international performance, The Hu strengthens global awareness of Mongolia's rich cultural heritage, demonstrating that traditional music can be relevant and appealing in a modern context. Their efforts not only help preserve cultural elements that might be at risk of disappearing but also build a positive image of Mongolia as a country with a rich and dynamic cultural heritage. This influence is crucial in an era of globalization, where cultural identities can easily be overshadowed by dominant cultures. (D'Evelyn et al., 2022).

Strengthening Mongolia's Positive Image

The Hu has played a significant role in enhancing Mongolia's positive image internationally through the awards they have received and their performances at various renowned music festivals. One of the most notable recognitions is their designation as "UNESCO Artist for Peace" in 2020, acknowledging their contributions to promoting peace and Mongolian cultural heritage through music. This honor is not only a prestigious accolade for The Hu but also a significant recognition for Mongolia, highlighting its rich cultural heritage and commitment to peace on the international stage (UNESCO, 2020).

Hu's performances at prominent music festivals like Download Festival in the UK and Rock im Park in Germany have also garnered global media attention and international audiences. These performances not only promote their music but also spotlight Mongolia's cultural richness, increasing appreciation for Mongolian traditions and values worldwide. Media coverage of their performances helps build a positive narrative about Mongolia as a dynamic country with a valuable cultural heritage. With each award and international appearance, The Hu helps reinforce Mongolia's reputation as a valuable cultural hub and an important contributor to intercultural dialogue.

Promoting National Identity and Patriotism

The lyrics of The Hu's songs often reflect national identity and patriotic spirit, playing a crucial role in promoting these values to a global audience. Songs like "Yuve Yuve Yu" and "Wolf Totem" highlight elements of Mongolian culture, including tales of bravery, national pride, and ancestral heritage. For instance, "Yuve Yuve Yu" invites listeners to reflect on their national identity and pride in Mongolia's heritage, while "Wolf Totem" uses the symbolism of the wolf to emphasize strength and courage, core values in Mongolian culture.

These patriotic messages not only reinforce Mongolia's national identity domestically but also resonate with international audiences, fostering understanding and appreciation of Mongolian values. Through their music, The Hu successfully conveys deep stories and values that evoke a sense of pride and national identity among Mongolians and educate global audiences about important aspects of their culture. In this way, The Hu not only promotes national identity and patriotism but also helps build a positive image of Mongolia on the world stage, demonstrating that music can be a powerful tool in cultural diplomacy.

Increasing Interest from International Tourists

Hu's international performances and effective social media strategies have sparked curiosity and interest among tourists to visit Mongolia. Before The Hu gained international attention, the number of tourist visits to Mongolia was relatively stable, with figures around 467,000 in 2015 and 471,000 in 2016. However, after The Hu started gaining widespread recognition, especially in 2018, there was a significant increase in tourist visits. In 2017, the number of tourists increased to 543,000, a 15.3% rise from the previous year.

This trend continued in 2018 when The Hu released a viral music video on YouTube, bringing the number of tourists to 598,000, a 10.1% increase compared to 2017. The increase persisted in 2019 when The Hu released their debut album "The Gereg," which received critical and commercial acclaim. The number of tourists in 2019 reached 637,000, a 6.5% increase from 2018. This data suggests that The Hu's cultural promotion through their music likely contributed to the growing interest in Mongolia as a tourist destination. By introducing traditional Mongolian instruments like the Morin Khuur, Tovshuur, and the throat singing technique Khoomei to global audiences, The Hu has successfully increased awareness and appreciation of Mongolia's cultural heritage.

Their international performances at major music festivals and cultural events have also provided Mongolia with a larger platform on the global stage. The commercial success of The Hu demonstrates that traditional culture can adapt and thrive in a modern context, proving that traditional Mongolian music can attract global audiences and remain relevant in the modern music industry. As effective cultural ambassadors, The Hu has helped raise Mongolia's profile in the eyes of the world, strengthened diplomatic relations, and attracted more international tourists to their country. Their dedication to preserving and promoting Mongolian cultural heritage has not only enriched the world of music but also strengthened Mongolia's cultural identity on the global stage.

Empowerment and Preservation of Traditional Culture

The Hu has successfully integrated throat singing techniques like Khoomei and traditional instruments such as the Morin Khuur into their music, helping to preserve and promote these cultural elements on the international stage. Khoomei, which allows singers to produce two or more notes simultaneously, and the Morin Khuur, known as the horsehead fiddle with its distinctive sound, are integral parts of Mongolia's cultural heritage. Through their music, The Hu not only introduces these elements to a global audience but also ensures that these traditions remain vibrant and relevant in a modern context. (Nylander, 2023).

Their efforts in preserving this cultural heritage contribute significantly to the pride and cultural identity of Mongolia. (Liliweri, 2018). By bringing these traditional elements to the international stage, The Hu has created a platform for the world to appreciate Mongolia's rich culture. Their performances at global music festivals and collaborations with international musicians have increased the visibility and appreciation of Mongolian culture. Furthermore, the awards they have received, such as the "UNESCO Artist for Peace," affirm their role as cultural ambassadors advocating for the preservation and promotion of Mongolia's cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2020). Their dedication to maintaining and promoting traditional Mongolian culture has strengthened national cultural identity and enhanced Mongolia's reputation worldwide.

International Cultural Collaboration

Hu's collaborations with international musicians, such as Jacoby Shaddix from Papa Roach, demonstrate how music can serve as a bridge connecting different cultures. In the new version of the song "Wolf Totem," this collaboration not only broadened their musical reach but also brought new attention to Mongolian culture from the international music community. These collaborations show the flexibility and appeal of The Hu's music, which can blend traditional Mongolian elements with Western rock styles, attracting audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Such partnerships help introduce throat singing techniques like Khoomei and traditional instruments like the Morin Khuur to new listeners who might not have been exposed to them before. Integrating these elements into modern rock music not only creates a unique sound but also educates and inspires global audiences about the richness of Mongolian culture. These collaborations play a crucial role in strengthening international relationships through culture, showing that music can function as a powerful tool for diplomacy, building understanding, and appreciation across cultures. By reaching rock music fans worldwide, The Hu has successfully drawn greater attention to Mongolia's cultural heritage, increased international visibility, and reinforced Mongolia's image as a country with a dynamic and rich cultural legacy.

Economic Impact on the Music Industry

The international success of The Hu has also brought positive economic impacts to Mongolia. Sales of their albums, merchandise, and international concert tickets have provided significant financial contributions and opened new markets for Mongolian cultural products. Their debut album, "The Gereg," received critical and commercial acclaim, ranking high on various international charts, including in the United States and

Europe. This success has not only boosted revenue through album and merchandise sales but also through sold-out tours and international concerts. For example, their performances at major festivals such as Coachella and Lollapalooza in the United States and Download Festival in the UK demonstrate their global appeal and help raise Mongolia's profile as a country with rich cultural heritage.

Beyond direct revenues from the music industry, Hu's music diplomacy has also impacted Mongolia's tourism sector. Since Hu gained widespread recognition in 2018, the number of tourist visits to Mongolia has significantly increased. Data shows that the number of tourists rose from 471,000 in 2016 to 543,000 in 2017, reaching 598,000 in 2018, and continued to rise to 637,000 in 2019. This increase indicates that cultural promotion through Hu's music has successfully attracted international tourists' interest, contributing to the growth of Mongolia's tourism economy.

Conclusion

This research has revealed the significant impact of Hu's music diplomacy on Mongolia's national branding. The key findings show that The Hu, through their unique combination of traditional Mongolian music and modern rock, has successfully increased global awareness of Mongolian culture and strengthened the country's positive image. Their international performances received awards, and collaborations with renowned musicians have helped bring Mongolian cultural elements to a broader audience, fostering curiosity and appreciation for Mongolia's cultural heritage. Effective social media strategies have enabled The Hu to reach global audiences directly, enhancing Mongolia's profile as a culturally rich and attractive destination. Additionally, The Hu's international success has brought positive economic impacts to Mongolia through album sales, merchandise, and increased tourist interest driven by its music.

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